

Becky's Novel Template

Title:

Date:

1. **Opening Image** — tone and snapshot of what's to come; introduces main character(s) and problem, before adventure begins
2. **Theme Stated** — someone will say something to the hero that states the theme of the story (“be careful what you wish for” ... “family is more important than money”) but the hero won't understand or accept it until they have experience or context. The subject is what the story is about. The theme is what about what the story's about.
3. **Set-up** — grab the reader; introduce or hint at every main character, show what's missing in hero's life; tics/flaws to be exploded later then cured; running gags/callbacks. Often in Act Two hero gets these things, but it's not enough or not really what he wanted. What defines each character? If they're calm teachers, show them with chaotic kindergartners, for example.
(These reminders are in each section. I delete them as I answer them.)
 - a. Is there a clear introduction of main character? Personality, flaws, strengths, appearance?
 - b. Have I foreshadowed crucial scenes, point-of-no-return complication, climax ... all very subtly?
 - c. Each scene
 - i. Does setting drive action, establish mood, support theme? Does setting create most possible conflict?
 - ii. Goal/Motivation —> Conflict —> Resolution/Disaster
 - iii. Reaction —> Dilemma —> Decision
 - iv. High point?
 - v. Each scene make it worse for main char?
 - vi. Pivots, misdirection, twist?
 - vii. physical/emotional cliffhanger OR twist OR new info?
 - viii. clues or red herrings?
 - ix. Backstory in right place?
4. **Catalyst** — section ends with life-changing event
5. **Debate** — but nobody likes change so it's last chance for hero to say ‘This is crazy! Should I go? It's dangerous, but what choice do I have?’ This section must ask a question of some kind.
6. **Break Into Act Two** – character makes a choice and the journey begins.
7. **B Story** — subplot introduced; often a whole new bunch of characters; the A story is the main external story, while the B story is the internal story. Where hero learns stuff he can finally use to solve his dark night of the soul.
 - a. Check/refine character grid – problem/conflict/goal for each.
 - b. To decide on best subplot, which would make things worse for main char?
 - c. How would it affect outcome of main plot (because it must).
 - d. What are the three steps to the solution of the B Story?

8. **Fun and Games** — the promise of the premise; not concerned with forward progress; where all the movie trailer moments are found; we take a break from the stakes of the story and see what the idea is about [Jim Carrey acts like God in ‘Bruce Almighty’, Tobey Maguire tries out his superpowers in ‘Spiderman’, where buddies in buddy movies do their clashing, where detective finds the most clues.]
9. **Midpoint** — either up where the protagonist has a victory (though it’s a false victory), or down when the world collapses around him/her (though it’s a false defeat). Everything is great - he gets what he thinks he wanted or everything is awful because he didn’t. But what he thinks he wants isn’t what he needs.
 - a. What are the 2 or 3 big moments of the first half?
 - b. What are two complications for each?
 - c. How do these complications make character uncomfortable?
 - d. Check page count. Seem halfway?
10. **Bad Guys Close In** — literally, or where internal dissent, doubt, fear, jealousy begin to disintegrate the hero’s team or defeat his/her goal. Evil is not giving up and there’s nowhere hero can go for help. He’s on his own and must endure, which leads to All is Lost, rock-bottom moment
11. **All is Lost** — the opposite of Midpoint; if midpoint was false victory, then this should be false defeat ... and vice versa. The Whiff of Death – literal (person, flower, goldfish) or something symbolic. Goal looks even more impossible than before. Old world, old character, old way of thinking dies to make way for something new to be born
12. **Dark Night of the Soul** — how hero feels about his All is Lost moment. Hero must be beaten and know it. The point where he’s hopeless, clueless, drunk, stupid. Mourning the loss of what has died – the dream, goal, mentor, love, whatever.
13. **Break Into Act Three** — when hero figures out solution, using what he learns/sees in B Story/subplot. Both in the A Story and the B Story, which now meet and intertwine, the hero has won, found the solution. Now all he has to do is apply it. The classic fusion of A and B is the romcom hero getting the clue from the girl that makes him realize how to solve both his problems — beating the bad guy and winning the girl’s heart.
14. **Finale** — where lessons learned are applied, bad guys lose. Protag incorporates the theme, the nugget of truth that now makes sense. What are the 2 or 3 big moments of the second half?
15. **Final Image** — mirror image of the opening; drastic difference from beginning. Proof that change occurred within the character.

List of Clues (to make sure you’ve accounted for them all and explain significance as needed):

List of Scenes: